

Little Calumet River Basin Development Commission **(LCRBDC) 2015 Annual Report**

In 2015 the Little Calumet River Basin Development Commission (LCRBDC) saw a monumental event occur - it was the first time the entire 11 mile federal flood control project was inspected and passed by the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). This annual inspection is a very detailed process that encompasses everything from turf management to pump station operation and takes a couple of weeks to complete the entire system. Furthermore, by having the entire system pass the inspection, it confirms the protection necessary to eliminate mandatory flood insurance premiums (through their mortgage companies) for 1400 households along the river. This equates to \$4 million in savings to the community – a viable economic development project.

In previous years, some segments of the system had become non compliant with the federal standards of levee maintenance. The USACE determined that unless the LCRBDC made significant upgrades to these areas the USACE would not even inspect these non-complaint segments. As outlined in previous annual reports, the LCRBDC has been working on several areas/projects to address the significant amount of deferred maintenance that was inherited since the flood of 2008. The last segment of the project the USACE considered to be non-compliant was Gary North (an area from Cline Avenue on the west to I-65 on the east) and the LCRBDC is very proud to report that the work for this segment was finally completed, inspected and passed in 2015. The USACE Chicago District concluded that the Gary North segment were sufficient to make it active which was something not achieved in nearly 10 years.

In addition to Gary North, all of the other segments of the federal flood control project were inspected and passed the levee and gate components of the inspection. There were two (2) segments of the system that did not pass the pump station aspect of the inspection (the Burr Street segment and Gary South segment). This was due to compliance failure of the Grant Street West pump station and the Burr Street South pump station. These pump stations were not under the direct operational control of the LCRBDC (although they are part of the system as determined by the USACE) and had significant deficiencies and needed to be addressed by the operating entity – the Gary Sanitary District.

Building upon a key LCRBDC initiative - regional collaboration, it was agreed upon that the LCRBDC should/would take over the operation and maintenance of these two stations from the Gary Sanitary District. There is a current plan regarding the rehabilitating of these two pump stations in 2016 with a goal to have the work completed in time to for the next round of inspections. Please note that the LCRBDC is very proud of its website

(www.littlecalumetriverbasin.org) and it includes all of the USACE inspection reports dating back to 2013.

The LCRBDC had a number of larger projects during the 2015 calendar year including the construction of a High Velocity Channel, Kennedy Avenue Sandbar Modification and the Main Street sinkhole emergency. The High Velocity Channel was an initiative to improve the water flow from Hart Ditch as it enters into the Little Calumet River just west of Indianapolis Boulevard near Wicker Park. This project will significantly improve the movement of water during high rain events and will somewhat aid in reducing erosion along the heavily populated Hart Ditch. The Kennedy Avenue Sandbar Modification project was initiated to assist in redirecting the water within the levee by removing a large sandbar that had emerged over the years and caused the levee to experience eroding just west of Kennedy Avenue. The relocation of the sandbar also allowed the LCRBDC to construct a natural wildlife corridor within the river as well as to provide an access point for recreational canoeists/kayakers to enter the river near the South Shore Convention and Visitors Bureau. Finally, the Main Street Emergency repair project, another example of the LCRBDC partnering with the municipalities (Dyer, Munster, and Schererville) to reconstruct a culvert that had collapsed and threatening nearby roadways and neighborhoods. This culvert conveyed water from a large area that included portions of Indianapolis Boulevard and Main Street but also impacted numerous residential and commercial properties as well as a daily traffic count of nearly 14,000 cars.

During the year, the LCRBDC continued to address numerous long term issues facing the Little Calumet River but also the entire watershed. First, the LCRBDC directed a study to be completed of Deep River area of the watershed. Deep River originates near Winfield and includes Crown Point and Merrillville as it drains a majority of eastern Lake County through Hobart, Lake Station, and New Chicago. The goal of the study was to identify possible solutions and target areas for improvements to assist in alleviated some of the consistent flooding and erosion issues that persist in yet another long neglected area of the watershed.

The LCRBDC is also pursuing the installation of back-up generators at some of the key pump stations along the system. This is critical in that should any of the targeted stations lose power, nearby residents would go without protection as designed by the USACE. The LCRBDC is also looking to address the multitude of road closures that need to be planned for and manned during times of high water events. Under the current plan the federal flood control system requires nearly 66,000 sandbags along specific crossings. The LCRBDC is engaged in a long term plan to raise roadways and bridges, in cooperation with county and city officials, with the goal to reduce the number of potential closures over the next few years.

Finally, the LCRBDC continues its collaboration effort with several agreements completed with numerous entities throughout Lake County. Examples include the agreement

with Lake County Solid Waste District to provide land for their leaf composting operation; an agreement with Lake County Commissioners to install a new 911 communications tower to assist with their operations center; finally during a recent rain event, the LCRBDC provided 40,000 sandbags and a sandbag machine to assist the Kankakee River Commission with protecting residents from flood waters.

Please do not hesitate to contact Executive Director Dan Repay or Chairman William Baker should there be any questions or need for additional information.